

A conversation with David Bier, December 14, 2015

Participants

- David Bier – Director of Immigration Policy, The Niskanen Center
- Alexander Berger – Program Officer, US Policy, Open Philanthropy Project

Note: These notes were compiled by the Open Philanthropy Project and give an overview of the major points made by David Bier.

Summary

The Open Philanthropy Project spoke with Mr. Bier of the Niskanen Center (Niskanen) in order to receive an update on Niskanen's work on immigration. Conversation topics included Niskanen's recent activities, immigration policies Niskanen is promoting, the Security Against Foreign Enemies (SAFE) Act, and Niskanen's recruiting efforts.

Niskanen Updates

Recent activities

Prior to the November 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris, Niskanen was pushing its private resettlement idea forward by meeting with various officials to address questions and garner support.

Since the Paris attacks, Niskanen's advocacy for private resettlement has largely been paused. Instead, Niskanen has been combatting the argument that refugees pose a threat to the U.S. For example, Mr. Bier's recent blog post *Six Reasons To Welcome Syrian Refugees After Paris* received a good deal of attention and resulted in his appearance on conservative talk shows to discuss the issue.

During the discussion of the SAFE Act, Niskanen suggested amendments and other ideas designed to lessen the negative impact if the legislation were to pass. For example, Niskanen promoted the addition of a sunset provision to the bill, which would have required Congress to revisit the law every one or two years.

Immigration policies

Private refugee resettlement

Some political stakeholders have expressed interest in the idea of private sponsorship, which Niskanen has been promoting.

Niskanen is currently preparing responses to questions that have been asked about the federal government's potential role in private resettlement and finishing a paper on private resettlement.

State-sponsored visas

Niskanen is preparing several papers on how the increased use of state-sponsored visas could improve the U.S. immigration system. When discussing this idea with

Congressional offices, the most frequent question Niskanen has received is whether states actually want the authority to sponsor visas. Accordingly, Niskanen is trying to get a few state legislatures to pass resolutions in favor of these programs in order to demonstrate demand.

Future efforts

Niskanen does not expect that Congress will not take any positive actions on immigration reform in the near term, so it is laying the groundwork necessary to promote its immigration reform proposals in the longer term.

Recruiting

Niskanen has been making some progress in recruiting for their immigration policy counsel role, though they have not yet made an offer.

*All Open Philanthropy Project conversations are available at
<http://www.givewell.org/conversations>*